

seldom seem to be; leaping about from ships
 to sealing-
 wax with a garrulous disorder that, in their
 final form
 with all Montaigne's successive additions
 incorporated,
 sometimes grows perhaps a little too
 disorderly and long-
 winded. But he does succeed admirably in
 making Ms
 pen, not write, but talk. He is his own
 Boswell. Way-
 ward as Sterne, without Sterne's crudity or
 silliness,
 whether he is gossiping about 'the elephant
 that in the
 love of an herb-wife, in the city of
 Alexandria, was co-
 rivall with Aristophanes the Grammarian', or
 quietly
 discussing his own death, he creates the
 illusion of a living
 voice, ironic, whimsical, sincere. The first of
 essayists
 remains the master of them all.

And, after his art, his matter—what has that
 for us today?

It is too easy to think of Montaigne as
 rather a carpet-
 philosopher, an old Gallio in dressing-gown
 and slippers,
 nibbling at life in the snug security of his
 library, lie a
 wise mouse in a cheese. I do not greatly
 think about
 Montaigne', wrote Clough, who had learnt
 from Dr.
 Arnold a less compromising idealism. But
 Montaigne's-
 was more than fair-weather wisdom. 'I have
 a thousand
 times', he casually records, "gone to bed in
 mine house,
 imagining I should the very same night
 either have beene
 betrayed or slaine in my bed.' His house
 escaped pillage,
 indeed, just because he had the audacity to
 leave it open
 and undefended. Few remember how in the

Religious

Wars, once when it was treacherously
seized, and again
when he was captured out in the country by
masqued
marauders and robbed, his frank serenity
somehow
touched the ruffians to forgo their advantage
and release
him. Few remember how many of these
calm pages
come from a man tortured, without hope of
relief, by
incurable disease. Montaigne was no Horace
safe on his
Sabine farm in the peace of Augustus; no
Fitzgerald in